/98 cont./

587 [589] 836 [765] A widow has freedom of sexual intercourse. There is no definite period of mourning for her deceased husband and she may remarry at any time, except that she must have the approval of the brothers of the deceased husband. If either the elder or the younger brother of the deceased wishes to marry the widowed sister-in-law, then she may not marry an outsider. Otherwise she returns to her family to marry again. At the time of the second marriage a sorcerer priest is also asked to perform the ritual. There is no go-between nor a formally set date. At the wedding the "shame-covering parasol" must be opened fully. On reaching her new husband's home she enters by the front entrance. /99/ A widow may marry again and again. Furthermore, she can have a husband marry into her household.

(3) Birth

842 [782] 843 844 Despite the hard life of the Miao, the desire for sons is very strong with both rich and poor. When a Miao man has no son at middle age he must pray to the gods and make a vow for the early birth of a son. A pregnant Miao woman keeps on working. At the time of delivery, they use a bamboo sifter placed on the ground, lined with cotton wadding on which is placed a layer of ragged garments. The woman stands with her legs apart, the body slightly bending, her two hands gripping the side of a bed or a bench. If she happens to be working on a mountainside and does not have time to get back home, then she chooses a place under the shade of a tree where she can easily get a grip. If the newborn child does not cry, she digs [825] out a blood clot from its mouth, or sometimes she keeps a cat ready on the side, and hits it to make it meow so as to startle 845 the infant awake. In case of complicated childbirth, an experienced old woman in the village is asked to help extract the child with the hands. Should an infant die in the womb, it is taken out with a hook, or sometimes a sorcerer priest is

845 /99 cont./
asked to utter and write spells to hasten the womb. After the
• 844 infant is born the cord is cut with a pair of scissors and the placenta is buried in the ground in the house or outside.

After childbirth a Miao woman drinks several bowls of cold water for the purpose of purifying her blood. Within three days
846 she goes out to the fields to work. There are cases in which a woman gives birth in the forenoon and goes out to work in the afternoon. It is said that the Miao woman is able to do this by
[278] eating a secret herb. For postnatal nourishment the poor eats
[556] eggs and the rich eats chicken.

553 Recently, the Miao have adopted the Chinese custom of
[177] inviting friends and relatives to a feast and naming ceremony on the third day after a child's birth. A name is sometimes
551 adopted according to the time of birth. For instance, if a child is born in a certain month, it would be named after the month. The chief of the Miao at the time of the rebellion during the
[805] reign of Emperor Ch'ien Lung was called Wu pa-yüeh /Wu, Eighth Month/. Sometimes the name of the season when the birth occurred is adopted. In another case, the weight of the infant may be used as the name, for instance, an infant weighing so many chin at birth will be named for that weight. In still other cases, the name of an animal, a pig, goat, sheep, dog, or cow is used in the belief that the child will be easy to raise.

853 There is no definite time for feeding the baby. Generally when the baby cries it is fed. If the mother has no milk, the baby is then fed with sugar and rice. At the time of teething,
856 if the first tooth emerges in the upper jaw, it is a sign of ill
[987] omen, portending the death of one of the parents or paternal
[763] grandparents, because the Miao believe that such a tooth is a
[826] grave-digging hoe.

/100/ A pregnant unmarried girl often produces an abortion
847 by swallowing mercury. Illegitimate infants are often drowned.
848 Properly married couples rarely practice abortion or infanticide.

4:Mickey E-5 (1940-?) 1947 AE5 Miao AE5

timber into agricultural implements, and did so. I have never found out what the truth of the matter was, but the Miao lost his case because the *hsien* judge found that his witnesses had not told the truth at other points.

Another case was that of a Miao who had become so angry at his wife that he had her jailed. Her relatives wanted to have her released so that her child need not be born in prison. The husband had disappeared and could not be found to ask him to change his mind. I wrote to the magistrate in the next *hsien*, and after his condition that some merchant in the city go surety for her was met, she was released.

A family in Shang-sai wished to build a house. The head of the family borrowed money from his brother. This brother later brought suit for the return of some of the loan. This was paid at the *hsien* offices on the day set, but the brother did not appear to receive it. Later the family who had received the loan sued the brother for the expense to which they had been put because of his failure to come and receive the payment on the day set.

These, of course, were only a few of the disputes which arose in the village or among the whole group of Cowrie Shell Miao. Most small matters were settled among themselves. Much of the old man's time was taken up with such cases. Sometimes others of the village elders were called in for consultation. This was according to the Chinese Government system, though in effect this formed the village government, or council. If matters could not be settled by them, they were taken before the *lien pao* official, and, if necessary, to the *hsien* magistrate.

Economic Institutions. Within Cowrie Shell Miao society there were no specific economic institutions. Families formed economic units, and as such carried on trade with Chinese merchants and rice brokers in the *hsien* city. Just inside the walls were a few tea-shops owned by city-dwelling Cowrie Shell Miao, conveniently situated for visiting country kinfolk to gather before they returned to their villages from market. The shop keepers were gardeners and farmers as well, and much of their trade was really a form of family visits. In their shops, as well

4:Mickey E-5 (1940-?) 1947 AE5 Miao AE5

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Childbirth. After a girl was married she returned to her parents' home. There she stayed, except for short periods in her husband's home during the busy seasons and at feasts, until she was pregnant. Before the child was born she went to live in his home permanently. Sometimes, but not always, when a woman was in labor a priest was asked to chant and cast lots in her behalf. This he did in a room adjacent to the one in which the mother was confined, or out-of-doors nearby. There were no midwives. The mother was assisted by other women who had borne children, either from her husband's or a related household.

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The next morning after a child was born the mother might appear with the baby on her back, even in the kitchen where food was being prepared. There was no idea of impurity and she was not required to keep closely at home for a month or forty days, as in the case of Chinese in the vicinity and among some other groups of Miao. She might rest for three or four days, during which other women came to see the baby, but after that she worked as before at even the hardest of labor, with the baby on her back. I am not sure whether she was expected to refrain from certain foods, or not. I offered one mother an orange which she said she could not eat. She gave it to an older son.

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Announcement Gifts. After the second grandson was born in the family where I was living, the father prepared gifts to send to the village from which his father had migrated, to the household in which an uncle still lived. First in the procession came two men playing the small trumpet. One of them led a black goat. This was a play on words, as the name of a goat (*yang*) has the same sound as the family name (*Yang*) and a word meaning "increase, growth." Then came two men bearing two poles, to which was fastened a whole dead pig, beautifully cleaned and white. After them came two men bearing a similar frame but empty. Last came a man bearing two baskets on a carrying pole. One of the baskets contained red candles and the other a

[1] See Chapple and Coon, 1942, p. 706.

4;Mickey E-5 (1940-?) 1947 AE5 Miao AE5

women. One man of fifty-odd died from the kick of a cow, one of nearly seventy of heart trouble. Two old women of eighty-four and seventy-six died of old age. There were at least thirteen births in the period. This would have resulted in a slight increase in population had there not been families who moved to other villages.

Priests. The day that the wife of Cheng-hsiang was in labor for her second son, the old man who lived in the other part of their house and who was a head carpenter and a maker of bamboo articles such as scoops and baskets, set a bowl of rice grains with three lighted incense sticks in it on a bench and a bowl of wine on the floor in front of it. Then, holding a small chicken in his left hand, he chanted in Miao, cast lots with four pieces of bamboo, spilled out some of the wine, and then cast lots again. Finally he spilled all of the wine, took up the bowl of rice, and the bamboo pieces and went away. This was done in the room outside of the one in which she was confined, and the priest faced her door as he went through the ritual.

On that same day I saw the oldest and most proficient priest in the village squatting before a tripod of bamboo branches, behind and facing the corner of that house. Before him were a bowl of rice and one of wine. As he chanted he cast lots with pieces of bamboo. A boy from the house before which he was chanting brought him a piece of smoked pork in a loop of straw, a small bundle of straw, and a cleaver. He cut off a piece of the meat and put it on the burning straw, after which he spilled some of the wine on the ground.

Twice I saw this man with two younger men going solemnly from house to house. The first time the older man carried a bowl of rice, one of the others a gong, and the third a long staff of bamboo with colored paper streamers and leaves at the top, and a bag with rice in it. The man who carried the gong struck it as they went from one house to the next. At each house the older man entered and set his bowl of rice on a stool or bench, then, facing the door, chanted. The man with the staff and rice bag set the former down beside the door and both younger men went in. In each house they gave them a small measure of rice for the bag. The second time

8: Graham E-5 (1921-1936) 1937 AE5 Miao AE5

585 they really want her but it is also true that brides sometimes run away at this time. Another ceremony that is sometimes performed at a wedding is that of calling the soul of the bride. Her soul may fail to come with her and if it does not come, she will die.

After a few months have passed, the bride is permitted occasionally to visit her parents, but henceforth her husband's home is her home and his family is her family. She calls her husband's parents father and mother.

[847] [846] 791 844 When an unmarried woman gives birth to a child, the child is made away with as secretly as possible and little is said about it. When a married woman becomes pregnant, about three or four months before the child is born a *tuan kung* 端公 is called. He takes a bowl, fills it with water, and burns a paper charm in it. He then covers it first with a piece of paper, then with a blue cloth. He twists his hands in odd ways above the bowl of water. He calls his gods to come and protect the bowl of water and the woman. The water is supposed to be from a sea in heaven and to protect the woman from demons. The gods he has called live in the bowl of water as in a sanctuary, and they protect the pregnant woman. Therefore the bowl of water is hung up from a beam of the roof inside the house. On the first and fifteenth of each moon the head of the house pours water into the bowl to replace the water that has evaporated and burns paper money as a means of presenting money to the gods.

The *tuan kung* is paid before this ceremony and after the birth of the child if the child lives. He may be paid a dollar or two or be given clothing, pork, a chicken or some other object.

After the birth of the child the *tuan kung* is invited back to take down the bowl of water. He arranges tables, burns incense and lights candles, and burns paper or spirit money as an offering to the gods. Then he takes down the bowl of water. He repeats incantations, then pours the water out in the main hall near the end farthest from the door. He is again paid money or given presents if the child and the mother live, but not otherwise.

846 The mother is impure after the child is born and cannot leave the house for one month. On the third day a chicken is killed for her. The salt she eats must be burnt red in a fire before she can eat it, else she may become ill. On the seventh day the mother washes all her clothes. Then she can move about freely in the house, but she must not eat with anybody else, and she must be given good food to eat—eggs, vermicelli, cabbage and so on. But she must not eat fat meat and a few other things that are supposed to injure her. She must not eat the flesh of an animal that has been killed within the past month or two.

8: Graham E-5 (1921-1936) 1937 AE5 Miao AE5

At the end of a month the shells of all the eggs she has eaten, most of which have been given her by her friends, are taken out and thrown away on a nearby road or path which indicates to her friends that the month of confinement is over and that she is now pure. None of the eggs given her during her confinement can be given away. They must all be eaten by the mother.[12]

Among some of the Ch'uan Miao it is customary for a woman to give birth to her child while squatting beside her bed, holding onto the sides of the bed with her two hands. Another woman stands behind her and helps hold her up, holding her about the waist. The placenta of a boy is sometimes buried deep under a pillar of the house and that of a girl under a door of the house.

Fearing that demons may harm the child, some do not cut the baby's hair for three years. Then the mother's oldest brother is invited to come and cut the child's hair. This brother sometimes gives the child clothing, a hat, a brass or silver bracelet, and a chain with a lock to hang around the child's neck. This is done in the morning after the *tuan kung* has repeated his incantations and performed his ceremonies during the whole of the previous night. Some at this time make a hole through one ear of the child and hang an ear-ring of silver or brass in it. The hole in the ear is an additional protection against demons.

When a boy is twelve, there is sometimes performed a ceremony of passing over the barrier which is called in Chinese *kuo kuan* 過關 and seems to be a sort of initiation ceremony. Twelve bowls are placed in a straight row on the floor of the house. They are covered by a piece of cloth about twelve feet long. Twelve sharp knives are placed on the floor in a direct line with the bowls and about one foot apart. The *tuan kung* first walks along, stepping on each bowl and then on each knife. The twelve-year-old boy then follows him, also stepping on each bowl and each knife. Generally neither the feet of the *tuan kung* nor those of the boy are injured, but if the feet of the boy are cut by the knives the *tuan kung* gets no money. This ceremony protects the child and afterwards he is regarded and esteemed as an adult.

If others desire special protection for a boy that is less than twelve years old, that boy can follow across under the protection of the *tuan kung*. The child will then be protected from demons and the ceremony will not be repeated at the age of twelve, but he will not be regarded as an adult until the age of twelve.

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12. I have not been able to secure any evidence that the couvade was formerly practiced by the Ch'uan Miao.

[7 cont.]

844 4) Childbirth. The Miao-I people are physically very sturdy: their ability to procreate and their capacity for farm work are both great. The women too have to attend to house chores, being especially strong and fit, they regard childbirth as a common occurrence. When a married woman is pregnant [843] she has to be confined in her husband's house. At the time of childbirth she is attended by her mother-in-law or sister-in-law or sometimes she is just by herself. The umbilical cord is broken by means of a piece of stone, and the sac is placed in an earthen jar and buried underground or hung up high in the room. The baby is then washed with cold water. The mother 846 remains at home for a week, after which she goes up the hill to gather firewood or down the field to cultivate the land without further inhibition or recuperation. They are afraid to have 847 too many children and often get rid of them by drowning or simply killing them. It is said that when children are numerous there will be disputes over inheritance and litigations. [8] Moreover, if the parents have no property, the acquisition of many children means so much hard work to bring them up. So whether there is money or not in the family, to have children means added suffering and privation to the parents, who are therefore reluctant to have too many. Because of the prevalence [165] of infanticide the rate of childbirth is decreasing. This and the high mortality rate combine to endanger the growth of their population.

164 5) Disease. Due to the difficulties of livelihood the Miao-I cannot afford the facilities of health and sanitation. Their hardihood enables them to survive the cold seasons of winter and spring when little disease prevails. But summer and autumn are the seasons of ill health. In case of sickness there are no medical facilities in the Miao-I areas, and the patient is left to the mercy of nature or magic. Sometimes a mi-la [diviner] 755 or a kuei-shih [shaman priest] is asked to propitiate the ghost. Mi-la is also known as "mi-p'o," and kuei-shih as "tuan-kung." The patient's family first asks the diviner to ascertain the kind of evil spirit that is causing the trouble and the kind of animal most appropriate for sacrifice. Then the wizard priest is asked

[164 cont.]

768 inherited estate, upon which other children may likewise live, according to the particular arrangements agreed upon.

Among the settled "Méo" tribes (near irrigated rice fields or
423 particularly fertile areas) the idea of property is clearly established. The ground belongs to the one who has cleared it or laid it out, and it is transmitted by inheritance.

Everywhere else customs are found analogous to those of the "Man," the ground belonging temporarily to the one who cultivates it, but it is abandoned when it is exhausted or when a better piece of ground is found near which one goes and settles.

The "Méo" woman gives birth sitting on a tabouret, supported
844 by her mother and by other old women. She afterward lies down on a cot bed. The placenta is buried in front of the door, if a boy is
553 born; it is buried [165] under the hearth if it is a girl (1). Thirty-
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[775]

1. The "Méo" must know where his placenta is so that he may retrieve it when he is reincarnated.

three days after his birth the child receives his name. Relatives and friends bring presents to him and this is the occasion for a feast
[527] as sumptuous as the resources of the family permit. Gifts and feasts are renewed upon all the birthdays. In principle, the children are
853 nursed for three years.

Abortion is practiced among the "Méo" for all irregular
847 pregnancies (unmarried women and widows). In case of failure, the baby simply is abandoned from the moment of his birth and dies of hunger.

Among certain "Méo" tribes of China the "couvade" still is
846 practiced (the husband goes to bed during the accouchement and receives treatment). This custom is not practiced by the "Méo" of Tonkin, but one observes among them customs that appear to be derived from it. The husband must follow a vegetable diet, he is forbidden to be away from home and to cross over the passes leading toward the neighboring valleys.

582 The "Méo" may contract marriage, either within their own clan, or within any other tribe of the group. They marry very seldom outside their group.

000 from their necklaces. They like dancing, songs and music. Their
533 instruments are the flageolet and flute with organ pipes or sen. The
534 latter is composed of a stout tube ending in a metal mouthpiece, in
535 the middle of which are inserted six organ pipes of varying length, pierced with holes at their base. To play this instrument one blows into the mouthpiece while holding the large tube in both hands at arm's length, at the same time closing certain of the holes on the organ pipes with the fingers. Thus nasal sounds resembling those of a bad accordion are obtained. This music is always accompanied by a somewhat grotesque dance in which the musician himself engages. Holding the instrument at arm's length in a very inconvenient way, he leans his body forward from the hips and, skimming over the ground with his feet, he starts hopping from one foot to the other, while turning about to the right or to the left. This heavy and graceless exercise reminds one of the dance of a bear at a fair. The Meo also play a small jew's-harp which is made up of a thin strip of brass
[562] which vibrates against the teeth. Women neither dance nor play musical instruments, but love to sing in shrill voices like a small girl, while working in the fields.

273 We shall see farther on that all the ceremonies are accompanie by feasts lasting several days. In addition in the high region the Meo /142/ have the reputation of being the mountaineers most inclined to drunkenness. Happily for the future of their race, the altitude at which they live and the arduous work to which they devote themselves are elements which combat the dangers of alcoholism.

● 844 Customs relative to childbirth are not remarkable. No sign
851 marks the house of a woman in confinement. A woman in labor seats
848 herself on a tabouret to give birth to her infant, assisted by her mother or midwife. If the new-born child is a boy, the placenta is buried in front of the main doorway, and if it is a girl, under the kitchen hearth As among the Tho, bastards are given a very poor reception. If an attempt to bring about an abortion has not been successful, the mother is forced to leave her infant to die of hunger.

584 Marriage preliminaries are shorter and less complicated than among the Tho. When a young man desires to wed a young woman, he tells his father about it, and he sends two of his men friends, selected from among older and respectable persons, carrying sticks of incense, in order to make the proposal. The sweet-smelling sticks are stuck into the soil and lighted in front of the doorway of the young woman's parents. If the master of the house offers a drink of alcohol

39: Bernatzik--75 E-5 (1936-1937) 1947 AO1 Thailand
Miao AE5

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Chapter 7

Life in the Community

a) Birth

527 [842] The day on which a child is born is an important day in the life of the Meau and one that the parents look forward to with longing. Even later on, the birthdays within the family are always festive days, an observation that Lajonquière (1)

1. II, p. 317.

also made.

● 844 Among the Meau, when the time of delivery comes, the woman squats on the ground next to the bed, and the husband supports her so that she does not topple over. Among men of [554] some means, a mat forms the underlayer; otherwise leaves suffice. The husband catches the child, ties the umbilical cord, severs it with a pair of scissors, and washes the child with warm water. The child is not yet swaddled, however. If the husband has not yet experienced a confinement, the parents help him. Midwives are unknown. The placenta and [846] umbilical cord are preserved in a bamboo which, in the case of a boy, is buried next to the middle post of the house, in the case of a girl under the bed of the parents, always about three-quarters of a meter deep. When I inquired as to the reasons for this distinction, I was told: "A girl leaves the house when she marries and from then on belongs to the other family; a boy, however, stays in the house and augments the prosperity of the family." My Meau informants did not know why the afterbirth is dealt with in such a manner. They also believed that it would not matter if an animal were to devour the afterbirth, /49/ for an evil spirit would certainly not do this, since it would not taste good to him. Even today, however, the Meau still do [178] this as their ancestors did and in accordance with tradition.

/166 cont./

776 825 [372] [626] [171] The spirit of fire is called tă hŏ lŭ pín. It is his function to take care of the fire. He would feel offended if one were to step over a fire, and he would take revenge in such a case by sending a tiger that would devour the perpetrator. Telford (1)

Page 133.

reports that the Meau and the Yau in western China, in the region of Tschieng /167/ Hung in Yunnan, believe in a bush spirit, Pe Tum Moi. Anyone who goes into the bush, especially to fetch water or firewood, has to be wary of him, because in the daytime this spirit changes into a frog, which, if it is put in a cage, disappears during the night. It is said that Pe Tum Moi commonly appears to human beings in the shape of a tiger that devours men and horses.

776 [844] I discovered a pair of spirits that appear only at the birth of a child. Corresponding to the fact that this pair only has a joint effect, it also has only a joint name: me yén.

[778] [756] The spirit sŭ kăn is able to increase money and property. Many Meau and all shamans erect a small altar for him in their houses. In addition to the helpful spirits already mentioned, there are a great many of them for the most varied spheres. What superhuman capacities these spirits have over and above the familiar activity, however, is unknown to the people. Individual spirits for individual persons are in any case in the minority, and there are no tutelary spirits that have to attend to a single person, so to speak.

[753] Lajonquière (1) writes of "evil spirits that may enter the

II, p. 313.

human body in order to cause sickness. They live in the interior of the earth. They are the souls of the beheaded or of the unburied dead." [177] [829] In Thailand I was unable to find confirmation of this conception, which can probably be traced back to Chinese influence. I discovered in general that the Meau in Thailand